

Subject
File

15 January 1953

OGC Has Reviewed

Mr. William L. Ellis, President
The Federal Bar Association
Columbian Building
Washington 1, D. C.

Dear Mr. Ellis:

I am glad to have a chance to state my position in regard to your letter of 9 January as the lawyers in my office most definitely continue to hold their jobs because of their ability and skill and for no other reason. I am particularly fortunate in having been able to keep my staff small and therefore run it more or less in the nature of a private law firm. I can also keep up pretty well with the work and capabilities of each one of the attorneys on my staff. All of them have been recruited by me except my deputy who was recruited by my predecessor. I have taken them almost equally from within the Agency and from outside of Government. In each case there has been available to me not only the usual form 57, but a personal history statement giving background, family history, education, experience and other factors. Of course everyone appointed in this Agency is subject to a complete security investigation.

In addition to these formal records, I have in each case interviewed the individual attorney applicant at least once and occasionally several times. I have also checked with their schools or former employers and on occasion their service records where appropriate. By the time therefore that they are ready for appointment, I have personally a pretty fair knowledge of their general ability and legal skill. Obviously, of course, in a small organization such as mine their personality must be of such nature as to present a good chance of compatibility with the other members of the staff and the Agency employees with whom they will work.

I have had no occasion to regret any of the choices I have made in this manner and feel that I have a law office that could stand up in the quality of its work with any in Government or, for that matter, with any private law firm I have had dealings with. I imagine in a larger office the review and final choices might have to be delegated and made somewhat more mechanical, but I believe the personal attention of the responsible chief of the office is well worth the time spent and pays great dividends in the long run.

As general observations, I have found no type of person or personal characteristics which have any advantage to the office. I have concentrated on a thorough education (but have not found that any particular school or schools give an advantage), general intelligence, experience, and above all, motivation for career service in the Government based not only on whatever security there may be in Government work but on the philosophy that public service has its own rewards greater than the monetary rewards of private practice.

Very truly yours,

LAWRENCE R. HOUSTON
General Counsel

LRH:kr